

Raffles' Aides-de-Camp in Java

by John Bastin

In the Introduction to her *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, F.R.S. &c.* ... (London, 1830), pp. vi–vii, Lady Raffles wrote that she felt it to be ‘her duty publicly to record the sense which Sir Stamford always entertained of the attachment of his private Secretary, the late Mr. Assey,¹ and of his personal staff, Captain Travers, Garnham, Dalgarns, Watson, and Methven, during his government of Java. The enthusiasm of this little band of friends, in all that concerned his honour and happiness, tended to soften the troubles in which he was involved’. The reference is to Raffles’ *aides-de-camp* Lieutenants (as they then were) Thomas Otho Travers (1785–1844), Robert Clement Garnham (1782–1827), James Dalgarns (1787–1875), Thomas Colclough Watson (1787–1834) and Cathcart Methven (1787–1823). They were all young officers in their twenties, only slightly younger than Raffles, with whom they lived on intimate terms as members of his official ‘family’ at Government House, Buitenzorg (Bogor), or at Batavia (Jakarta) for varying periods during the British occupation of the island. They all became his closest friends, and three of them — Travers, Methven and Watson — also served with him for a time when he was Lieutenant-Governor of Fort Marlborough between 1818 and 1824. Lady Raffles’ tribute to these men is somewhat remarkable, for although it is strictly accurate with respect to Java, she knew that when she wrote it two of them, Watson and Methven, had been among the bitterest and most active of Raffles’ enemies during the last years of his life, causing him much pain and annoyance.

Before briefly reviewing the careers of these officers² it is worth noting that portraits of three of them are extant. The first is a miniature of Watson by George Chinnery (1774–1852),³ and the other two are a miniature and oil painting,⁴ respectively, of Travers and Garnham in the possession of their families. I am grateful to their present owners for allowing me to reproduce them here. What will strike readers is that the portrait of Travers is not that

¹ Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, p. vi.

² See also L. A. Garrard, *Aide-De-Camp to Sir Stamford Raffles: Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Garnham* (Privately printed, 1985).

³ Catalogue 53, *In the Western Manner Painted by Chinese Export Artists; also works by George Chinnery and other Western Artists in the Far East* (Summer 1989), no. 3.

⁴ See note 24.

represented to be him in the plate facing p. 65 in C. E. Wurtzburg's *Raffles of the Eastern Isles* (London, 1954), or in the frontispiece to my edition of *The Journal of Thomas Otho Travers 1813-1820* (Singapore, 1960), due to a misunderstanding between Wurtzburg and Travers' family in the 1950s. That particular portrait is a pastel drawing which, because of the uniform, may be that of Lieutenant Thomas Clode, another *aide-de-camp* of Raffles', whose death in 1812 is mentioned by Travers in his Journal.⁵ The miniature portrait of Travers reproduced here bears on its back the date, 'October 4th 1817', which was his wedding day, suggesting that it was probably executed for this occasion as a gift to his wife, Mary Peacock Leslie. Travers was the oldest and most intimate of Raffles' friends in Java, the two having first met in Penang some years prior to the British invasion of Java.⁶ He accompanied Raffles to England when he left the island in March 1816, and he remained with him during long periods of his leave in Cheltenham and London before again joining him in October 1817 when Raffles left England to take up the appointment as Lieutenant-Governor of Fort Marlborough in west Sumatra. Travers served him faithfully during his second administration, as he had done earlier in Java, but perhaps his greatest service to Raffles, or at least to his historical reputation, was that he kept a Journal, in which he recorded much valuable information about him when he was in Indonesia and also when he was in England during 1816-17.

Plate I — *Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826)*. Plaster cast of a bust by Sir Francis Chantrey.

Plate II — *Captain Thomas Otho Travers (1785-1844)*. A coloured miniature portrait executed in 1817.

Thomas Otho Travers (1785-1844)

Travers was born in Patrick Street, Cork, on 25 September 1785, the third son of Robert Travers, a banker of Ballynamona, and his wife, Barbara

⁵ *Journal of Thomas Otho Travers*, 19. Thomas Cloke of the 25th Battalion Madras Native Infantry was born in 1786, the son of George and Sarah Cloke of Berkshire. He was educated at Eton College during 1799-1802, and was appointed a Cadet in the military service of the East India Company in 1804. He was posted Lieutenant on 10 September 1805. After the British conquest of Java he was appointed Assistant Secretary to Government and an *aide-de-camp* to Raffles. He died of a fever on P. Bangka on 28 June 1812 while serving as acting Engineer on the British expedition to Palembang (note 11). It seems that his personal effects came into Travers' possession, possibly together with his portrait.

⁶ Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, 6.

Travers (née Delmain). He was appointed a Cadet on the Bengal military establishment of the East India Company in 1803 and sailed for India from Portsmouth on 20 March 1804. He arrived at Calcutta towards the end of August and was immediately posted to Kanpur. On 10 September 1804 he was appointed Ensign and on 23 September Lieutenant. In December 1804 he joined the Grand Army before Bharatpur under General Viscount Lake (1744–1808), and after serving with this army for some months he was posted permanently to the 1st Battalion of the 20th (Marine) Regiment Bengal Native Infantry. He joined the Regiment at Benares in August 1805. In the following year he accompanied his Battalion to Penang, and served there until he returned to India (Barrackpore) in 1806. He first met Raffles in Penang in 1806,⁷ and it is unfortunate that the first volume of the Journal he began keeping at this time has been lost,⁸ as it would probably have recorded information about him when he was serving as Assistant-Secretary to the Prince of Wales Island Government.

During the British invasion of Java, Travers accompanied his Battalion as Quarter-Master, and he was subsequently appointed Assistant Commissary-General and attached to the Brigade under Colonel Robert Rollo Gillespie (1766–1814).⁹ After the conquest of the island he was appointed to the permanent military staff as Sub-Assistant Commissary-General. In February 1812 he was appointed Assistant Secretary to Government in the Military Department, having earlier been appointed aide-de-camp to Raffles. He was placed in charge of the Commissariat Department on the expedition against Palembang in 1812,¹⁰ and his exposure to the unhealthy climate of Jakarta during the shipment of stores for the expedition led to his contracting malaria from which he suffered for the remainder of his life. After his return to Jakarta he resumed his former appointments, including that of aide-de-

⁷ Lady Raffles, *Memoir*, 6.

⁸ The first volume of Travers' Journal, beginning in 1805, and covering the years he was in Penang, was lent in January 1891 to a member of the Flint family. It was asked to be returned in April of the following year, but whether or not it was returned I have been unable to ascertain. In the Introduction to her *Memoir*, p. vii, Lady Raffles thanks Travers for having permitted her 'to make use of his Journal', but what she saw were simply re-written sections from the Journal supplied by Travers for her book. These so-called 'extracts' are printed in the *Memoir*, pp. 6, 7–8, 101–2, 123–4, 209–11, 274–9, 281–3.

⁹ See W. Thorn, *Memoir of the Conquest of Java; with Subsequent Operations of the British Forces in the Oriental Archipelago* (London, 1815); E. Wukelaar, *The Brown Soldier Sir Rollo Gillespie 1766–1814 A Historical Military Sketch* (Edinburgh and London, 1937), 140–80.

¹⁰ The expedition under the command of Gillespie was sent to Palembang in March 1812 to replace Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin by Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin, who ceded P. Bangka to the British in May 1812.

camp to Raffles, and in August 1812 he was given the additional posts of Town-Major and Commandant of Jakarta. In March 1814 he resigned his appointments to take to London Raffles' despatches containing his defence of the charges of corruption levelled against him by Gillespie.¹¹ He arrived in London in September 1814 and left again for Java in March 1815, arriving there in July, when he resumed his former appointments and was, in addition, appointed by the new Commander of Forces, Major General Sir Miles Nightingall (1768-1829), to command the Amboinese Corps. He accompanied Raffles as his aide-de-camp during his visit to the Javanese Principalities of central Java in January 1816 in the aftermath of the Sepoy Conspiracy,¹² and in March of the same year, pleading the necessity of a change of climate to cure his 'periodical attacks of Batavian fever', he joined Raffles aboard the *Ganges* (P. Falconer) for England.

On his arrival in London in July, he took lodgings opposite Raffles' house at 23 Berners Street. He went with him to Cheltenham shortly afterwards, and stayed with him there until 10 September, when he left for Ireland. He returned to England in November and joined Raffles during long periods of his leave in 1817, finally accompanying him in October aboard the *Lady Raffles* (H. Auber) to west Sumatra. He had been promoted to the rank of Captain on 27 May 1816, and Raffles appointed him to act as second Assistant to the Fort Marlborough Government. In April 1818 he carried to Jakarta Raffles' despatches regarding the boundary dispute with the Dutch in the Lampung region of southern Sumatra, and on his return in July 1818 he was given charge of the Treasury, when he discovered serious shortfalls in its funds.¹³ Raffles later appointed him to act as Secretary and First Assistant to Government, and in 1820 he was appointed Superintendent of Convicts and Military Commander of the Fort Marlborough station. In March 1820 he was appointed to succeed Lieutenant-Colonel William Farquhar (1770-1839) as Resident and Commandant of Singapore, and he arrived to take up his duties there on 8 April.

Farquhar, however, proved unwilling to resign his post, and after waiting in the settlement for many months, during which he served in the Pay

¹¹ Raffles had the voluminous papers relating to the charges printed in a few copies at the Government Press, Jakarta, in 1814. They were printed without a general title, but Raffles' own copy bears the following title in his own hand: 'The Charges of Major General Gillespie, against The Honourable T. S. Raffles Lieutenant Governor of the Island of Java, with various papers and documents in refutation of them relating to the administration of the British Government in that Island and its Dependencies'.

¹² P. B. R. Carey, 'The Sepoy Conspiracy of 1815 in Java', *BKI*, 133 (1977), 294-322; P. B. R. Carey, *The British in Java 1811-1816: A Javanese Account* (Oxford, 1992), 21-2, 29, 45, 439 n. 201, 503 n. 498, 523 n. 615.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 98.

Department, Travers applied for sick leave and sailed on the *Minerva* (J. Bell) for England on 2 December, arriving at Deal on 7 May 1821. Continued ill-health obliged him to resign from the East India Company's service, and in 1822 he was appointed Recruiting Officer for the Company in the Cork district of Ireland, and in 1830 Paymaster of the Company's Pensioners in Ireland. He held these two profitable posts until his death, which occurred at his house 'Leemount' in County Cork on 8 July 1844. As he had saved considerable funds during his time in Indonesia, he had enjoyed a flourishing retirement, Lady Raffles writing critically to her sister-in-law, Mary Ann Flint (1789–1837), on 10 October 1824: 'I am told they live in great style so to plate &c &c. Their table spoons are compared to *fire shovels*... they appear to have given themselves great airs and of course given offence ...'¹⁴

This was written by Lady Raffles when Travers was expected from Ireland to heal a breach that had occurred between him and Raffles sometime after his departure from Singapore in December 1820. The reason for this breach is not recorded by Travers in his Journal, but it is probable that Raffles was critical of his precipitate departure from Singapore, especially as he had received confirmation of his appointment as Resident by the Governor-General, the Marquis of Hastings (1754–1826), and instructions regarding the future administration of Singapore. But after his return to England Raffles had forgiven him, as he informed his sister, Mary Ann Flint, in a letter written from Cheltenham on 6 October: 'Tot & I have burnt the Papers as the saying is, and I expect him here in a few days from Ireland'. Later on 11 November he wrote to her: 'You will be glad to hear that Travers has been here & that all that had passed bet[ween] our last & present meeting has been forgotten'.¹⁵ Lady Raffles also wrote to her on 26 December 1824: '...did I tell you that Tot came over to Cheltenham for the purpose of shaking hands — staid a week & returned to his dear Cork — he is looking just the same'.¹⁶ This was not how Travers found Raffles: 'He seemed a complete Skeleton with scarcely skin enough to cover his bones[,] his head tormenting to a sad degree'.¹⁷

Travers had another meeting with Raffles in London in April of the following year, when there was a gathering of creditors of the failed agency house of Macquoid & Co., Jakarta, in which Raffles lost £16,000 and Travers a somewhat smaller sum. Travers noted in his Journal, rather ominously, that although Raffles' 'spirit and animation was great', his articulation was 'heavy' and 'thick'. He spent a number of days with Raffles and was shown around his country estate, 'Highwood', near Hendon in Middlesex. When he

¹⁴ MSS. Eur. D. 742/15 (BL-O & IOC, London).

¹⁵ MSS. Eur. D. 742/17 (BL-O & IOC, London).

¹⁶ MSS. Eur. D. 742/15 (BL-O & IOC, London).

¹⁷ MS. Travers' Journal, October 1824.

left London in May it was the last time he was to see Raffles, news of his death on 5 July 1826 reaching him in Ireland too late for him to attend the funeral. He recorded in his Journal his deep feelings at the loss of his 'earliest' and 'best' friend: 'Never in my life did I receive a greater shock than at perusing this letter describing the sudden and un[ex]pected manner in which this melancholy occurrence took place.... Few men perhaps were better acquainted than Sir Stamford and myself. Our acquaintance was of twenty years standing and during that period we had met with various and singular occurrences to attach us to each other. To me he had evinced the strongest friendship and had rendered me most essential service whilst I hope I proved myself not ungrateful of his kindness. We were for many years without a secret from each other and had his life [...] poor dear Fellow [...] been spared we should have yet passed some happy days together....'¹⁸

James Dalgairns (1787-1875)

Second to Travers among Raffles' *aides-de-camp* in Java was Lieutenant James Dalgairns of the 21st Madras Native Infantry, who had been attached to the Quarter-Master-General's Department during the British invasion of the island. He was the son of Andrew and Charlotte Dalgairns of County Forfar in Scotland, and was baptized on 3 January 1787. He was appointed a Cadet in the East India Company's service in 1803 and promoted to Lieutenant on 21 September 1804. He was attached to the Travancore Survey in December 1807, and between November 1808 and April 1809 he served at Bombay, after which he returned to Travancore. He joined the expeditionary force to Java in 1811 and fought in the Battle of Meester Cornelis on 26 August. In 1813 he was appointed Commandant of the Ambonynese Corps at Jakarta, and during Travers' absence from Java between March 1814 and July 1815, when he conveyed Raffles' despatches to London, Dalgairns took his place as Town-Major, Commandant of the Burgher Corps, and *aide-de-camp* to Raffles. On Travers' resumption of these posts on 10 August 1815, Dalgairns was made an Honorary *aide-de-camp* and, two days later, Sub-Treasurer to the Government. On 3 November 1815 he was appointed a member of the Revenue Committee. Dalgairns and Travers began sharing a house together in Jakarta in August 1815 looked after by twenty servants, and it was there that Raffles was entertained on the eve of his departure from Java in the ship *Ganges* by a number of his friends, one of whom proposed the inspired toast, 'May the Ganges run into the Thames'. Dalgairns remained in Java as *aide-de-camp* to Raffles' successor, John Fendall (1769-1825), and he travelled back to India with him, arriving in Calcutta on 3 September 1817. Three months later he proceeded on furlough to England. In 1823 he was appointed *aide-de-camp* to the Governor-General Lord Amherst (1773-1857), who in November 1825 gave

¹⁸ Ibid., April-May, July 1826.

him charge of the Brigade in the service of the Rajah of Nagpur. He apparently lost this command in 1830 and returned to England in the following year. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel on 15 May 1834, and retired from the service on 29 February 1840.

Unlike some other members of Raffles' staff in Java, Dalgairns remained faithful to him, and kept him informed of attempts made to discredit him by Captains Watson and Methven in Calcutta during 1822–3. In a letter to Thomas Macquoid dated 8 January 1824 Raffles wrote: '...my last from our friend Dal informs me that Watson & Methven are stirring all the powers of their evil spirits to injure my reputation there,.... Methven takes the lead and the other blows the fire & circulates the Stories agreed upon between them — They indeed out-Heroded Herod, and this last business seems to fill the measure of perfidy & ingratitude to the brim — Dal, thank god, remains as he always was — honest upright — kind & warm hearted'.¹⁹ Travers also had a high opinion of Dalgairns, recording in his Journal in August 1831, on receiving news of his arrival in England from India, 'few men stand higher in my estimation and perhaps there is none with whom I am so intimately acquainted or of whom I have so perfect a knowledge'. He named his fourth son, James Dalgairns Travers (1832–72), after him,²⁰ and in June 1842, shortly before his death, he visited his old friend in Scotland near Ingleston, 'where we were to find Col. Dalgairns' carriage waiting to receive us ... and arrived at Ingleston to dinner and found Dal the same good kind & affectionate [man] as he ever was ... I was quite surprized at the little change to be perceived in Dalgairns [...] he really looked as fresh and well as he did Twenty years ago and was in high health and Spirits'.²¹

¹⁹ Wurtzburg Collection, Cambridge University Library.

²⁰ He was called 'Dalgairns' in the family. Travers had four children by his wife, Mary Peacock, second daughter of Charles Henry Leslie of Wilton, County Cork. The first, Robert Otho Travers, was born on 14 August 1819 at Bengkulu in west Sumatra and died at Torquay on 29 June 1893. The second, Charles Henry Travers, was born on 1 March 1821 aboard the *Minerva* (J. Bell) on the homeward voyage to England from Singapore. He died at Inglefield in 1884. The third, Thomas Francis Travers, was born at 'Lessemount', County Cork, on 10 March 1830 but died in infancy on 31 January of the following year. The fourth, James Dalgairns Travers, was also born at 'Lessemount' in 1832, and died in 1872 in Guernsey. Travers' wife died on 2 April 1882, aged 92.

²¹ MS. Travers' Journal, June 1842.

Robert Clement Garnham (1782–1827)

Plate III — *Captain (later Lieutenant-Colonel) Robert Clement Garnham (1782–1827)*. Painting in oils by Samuel Lane (1780–1859), executed in 1817 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1818.

Robert Clement Garnham, whose portrait is reproduced here,²² was appointed an Honorary aide-de-camp to Raffles in 1813, and later accompanied him to England aboard the *Ganges* in 1816. He was born at Thetford in Norfolk on 13 June 1782, the son of John Garnham, and was appointed a Cadet on the Bengal military establishment of the East India Company in 1797. On 8 June of the following year he sailed to India on the *Sollicherry*, arriving in Calcutta on 22 December.²³ He was gazetted Ensign on 7 October 1798 and posted Lieutenant to the 14th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry on 1 November 1798. Little is known about his early years in India, but he proceeded to England on furlough aboard the *Lord Nelson* on 7 March 1803, only to be captured in the Bay of Biscay by the French privateer *La Bellone* (Perroud) and imprisoned for three years. He was released on parole in August 1806 and three months later exchanged for three French officers. He was promoted to the rank of Captain on 28 August 1806, having been transferred to the newly raised 24th Regiment Bengal Native Artillery in the previous year. He returned to India aboard the *Admiral Gardner* in February 1807 and reached Calcutta on 17 July. Garnham served with the 3rd Bengal Volunteer Battalion during the British invasion of Java, later transferring to the 5th Battalion, and in 1815 to the 2nd Battalion 29th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry. He was in the reserve Division during the Battle of Meester Cornelis on 26 August 1811, but he saw action against Dutch forces at Semarang early in September.

Between 23 January and 23 November 1812 Garnham was stationed on Madura and exercised civil and military control over the island, although his actual civil duties were officially confined to Sumenap. He was appointed Resident of Semarang on 10 October 1812 and took up his duties on 23 November. Earlier in that month (5 November) he was appointed President of the commission charged with the sale of lands in Semarang. On 31 July 1813 he handed over his duties as Resident to his successor and proceeded to Jakarta to accept from Raffles the appointment of Political Agent with the states of Borneo to conclude anti-piratical treaties with their rulers. He was also appointed an Honorary aide-de-camp to Raffles, possibly to enhance his status on the mission. He left Java on 21 August aboard HMS *Malacca* (D. Mackay) and returned in November after accomplishing a measure of

²² Painting in oils by Samuel Lane (1780–1859), probably executed in 1817 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1818.

²³ L. A. Garrard, *Aide-De-Camp to Sir Stamford Raffles: Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Garnham* (Privately printed, 1985).

success in his mission.²⁴ He returned to Semarang on 23 November, and early in 1814 he took up a new post as Resident of Beuki and Prabalingga to which he had been appointed during his absence in Borneo. In July 1814 he accompanied Admiral Sir Samuel Hood (1762–1814) on his tour of Java, and on 20 September he succeeded John Crawford (1783–1868) as Resident of Yogyakarta. He held this post until 31 August 1815 and was popular with the Yogyakarta court, Sultan Hamengkubuwana IV (r. 1814–22) presenting him on his departure with a jewel-encrusted *keris* which is depicted on the right-hand side of his portrait.²⁵ He returned to Jakarta on 23 September 1815 and departed for Bengal on 8 October, taking with him Raffles' appeal to the Governor-General, the Marquis of Hastings, against his supersession in the government of Java. Garnham arrived in Calcutta on 30 November, but finding there was no prospect of active service in India he applied for special leave and returned to Java on 13 March 1816. He had already been appointed on 1 March to his former post of Resident of Semarang by Raffles, but on learning of the latter's imminent departure for England he decided to accompany him aboard the *Ganges*. During the voyage a special dinner was arranged for him to celebrate his 35th birthday, at which 'many large bumpers were drunk and innumerable speeches made'.

According to Travers, the first act of Garnham on reaching England was to write a letter proposing marriage to his cousin, Isabella Mingay Syler. The marriage took place at Hackney Church on 3 September 1816 and the couple went to live at Ashfield Lodge in Suffolk. Garnham was present at the grand reunion dinner given to Raffles at the Albion in the City on 23 September, and he acted with Travers as one of his supporters.²⁶ He was promoted to the rank of Major on 14 January 1819, and a year later, on 8 January 1820, he sailed for India with his wife and daughter, Rosa Clementina, aboard the *Asia*, his wife giving birth on 4 May to a second daughter who was named Mary Asia, after the ship. Nothing is known of his life in India during the next two years, but he left for England on furlough with his family aboard the *Florentia* on 25 January 1822; his wife giving birth on 1 March to a third daughter, named Harriet Florentia. After a voyage lasting more than eight months, the ship reached England on 10 October. Garnham took up residence at 20 Somerset Place, Bath, and it was in Bath on 20 May 1824 that Travers met his old friend again, and dined with him and his wife on the following night, 'and passed a very pleasant Evening'.²⁷ On the first day of that month Garnham had been gazetted Lieutenant-Colonel and transferred from the 33rd Regiment Bengal Native Infantry to the 27th Regiment.

²⁴ J. Bastin, 'Raffles and British Policy in the Indian Archipelago, 1811–1816', *JMBRAS*, XXVII, 1 (1954), 95–9.

²⁵ De Haan, *BKI*, 92, 571.

²⁶ Carey, *The British in Java 1811–1816*, passim.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 511–12, n. 542.

Leaving his daughters behind, he and his wife sailed for India in June 1825 on the *Marquis of Wellington*, and on 1 September she again gave birth aboard ship, happily this time to a son, named Robert Edward Wellington. Calcutta was reached on 4 October and Garnham immediately proceeded to Burma where he was posted to the 67th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry. He reached Amherst Island on 2 January 1826 and was engaged in fighting before the peace treaty was signed on 24 February. He returned to India in August 1826, and on 4 November he was transferred to the 36th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry. Early in the following year, having been granted sick-leave, he embarked with his wife and son on the *Fairlie* and died at sea on 27 February 1827 in his 45th year.

Cathcart Methven (1787–1823)

The youngest of Raffles' *aides-de-camp* in Java, but in a sense the best known, was Cathcart Methven. He was born at St. Andrews in Scotland on 26 November 1787, the youngest of five sons and five daughters of Robert Methven, a writer (lawyer) of the town, and Euphemia Meldrum. On 19 February 1801 he matriculated at St. Andrews University where he studied Greek, Latin, Mathematics, Logic and Physics. This was not the standard degree course, and he did not graduate. He left the University in 1804 and in the same year was appointed a Cadet on the Bengal military establishment of the East India Company. He arrived in India on 10 August 1805 and on 18 and 19 August he was promoted to Ensign and Lieutenant in the 20th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry, in which Travers was a Lieutenant. He joined the British expedition to Java in 1811 and on 13 May 1812 he was appointed to a committee of investigation into the affairs of Banten. In May of the following year he was appointed Assistant to the Resident of Banten and Malay Translator to Government. On 14 September 1813 he was nominated provisionally to be Assistant to the Resident at Palembang and Minto (Muntok), but he left for Bengal in November and did not return to Java until August 1814. He was appointed to his former post as Malay Translator to Government on 31 August, and on 14 October as Assistant to the Resident of Buitenzorg (Bogor). On 14 January 1815 he was given temporary charge of the Batavian Ommelanden and he accompanied Raffles as his Acting Secretary during his journey through Java between 26 April and 1 August 1815. On 10 August he was appointed Assistant Secretary to Government in the Judicial and Revenue Departments, and on the departure of Raffles from Java in March 1816 he was instructed to take Travers' place in charge of the Military Department. Later that year he was a member of the British mission to Banjarmasin when he gained sufficient information to essay one of the earliest accounts of the Dayaks of Borneo.²⁸ He also brought back with him to

²⁸ 'An Account of some of the Customs peculiar to the Dayaks who inhabit the Country to the Westward of the Banjarmasin river in Borneo', *Malayan*

Java an *orang utan* and presented it to the British naturalist, Clarke Abel (1780–1826), a member of Lord Amherst's mission to China, who managed to get it back alive to England and have it illustrated in his book, *Narrative of a Journey in the Interior of China* (London, 1818).²⁹

Methven returned to India from Java with Raffles' successor, John Fendall, and arrived in Calcutta on 3 September 1817. He joined Raffles at Bengkulu in west Sumatra in 1819, and in August of that year he had charges preferred against him by the Registrar of the Pangerans' Court. Raffles managed to have these set aside as an act of friendship,³⁰ but a couple of months later Methven was again caught out in irregularities of office, and in October Raffles sent him to Penang, Travers recording in his Journal that he had been led astray by too great a love of money.³¹ Methven remained in Penang until March 1820, when he went to Singapore, claiming that he had been in Penang on sick leave and was trying to return to Bengkulu. A few weeks later he announced that he intended to leave the army and become a merchant. He obtained from the Resident a grant of land on the north side of the Singapore River, near Ferry Point, and built on it an imposing godown, partly constructed of bricks. This was completed in September 1820, and shortly afterwards Methven received orders to rejoin his Regiment in India. He stated that he would do so when he had liquidated his business interests in Singapore, but he continued to trade and his stock grew. Rumours also circulated that he was engaged in money lending and that he was cheating Asian traders. A commission of enquiry was established and the evidence was sent to India for final decision. Methven hurried to Calcutta and with the support of the Governor-General, the Marquis of Hastings, he was able to extricate himself from the charges. He returned to Singapore early in 1822 but it was not long before rumours of his shady dealings began to circulate again. Complaints were made to Raffles after he arrived in Singapore in October, and when Methven attempted to force him to purchase his godown for use as a court house at a price greatly in excess of its value, and shown him various instances of 'great personal disrespect', he ordered him to quit

Miscellanies (Sumatran Mission Press, Bencoolen, 1822), II, 1–6. Reprinted in *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependencies*, XV, no. 86 (February 1823), 138–9.

²⁹ Plate facing p. 323, after a drawing by Sydenham Edwards (1769?–1819). The *orang utan*, apparently the first to arrive live in the United Kingdom from Borneo, was kept at Exeter Change in the Strand, but it lived for only a few months and was stuffed and placed in the Hunterian Museum.

³⁰ *Journal of Thomas Otho Travers*, 131–2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 136. Raffles wrote to his sister, Mary Ann Flint, on 23 June 1821: 'This business of Methven's looks very ugly — I regret it, but fear his abominable love of Money has destroyed all better feeling —'. MSS. Eur. D. 742/17 (BL: O & IOC, London).

the settlement. A further set of charges followed him to India, but he managed to postpone an enquiry into his conduct when, on 27 November 1823, he was thrown from his horse on parade and died a few hours later. 'Methven's violent death', Raffles wrote, 'has probably saved him from a shameful exposure & public disgrace ...'³²

Thomas Colclough Watson (1787–1834)

Plate IV — *Captain Thomas Colclough Watson (1787–1834)*. A coloured miniature portrait by George Chinnery (1774–1852) executed in 1811.

A similar falling out occurred between Raffles and the last of his *aides-de-camp* in Java, Thomas Colclough Watson, who also served under him in west Sumatra. He was born on 20 June 1787, probably in Canada, the eldest son of Colonel Jonas Watson of H. M. 13th, formerly 65th Regiment, and Harriett, second daughter of the Rev. Thomas Colclough, Rector of Clenish. He was appointed a Cadet on the Bengal military establishment in 1801 and he arrived in India on 17 July of the following year, being posted Ensign on 10 August 1802 and Lieutenant on 30 June 1804 to the Honourable Company's Bengal European Regiment. He took part in the second Mahratta War and participated in the assault on Bharatpur in January 1805. He joined the expedition to Macau in 1808–9, when the Indian Government decided to garrison it against a possible French attack, and in 1810, on his return to India, he was made *aide-de-camp* to his uncle, Major General Samuel Watson, commanding the Dinapur Division. After the conquest of Java he was appointed (22 January 1813) as Assistant in the Lieutenant-Governor's office and on 9 April First Assistant. On 10 April he was made an 'Extra' *aide-de-camp* to Raffles, and on 3 February 1814 he was given the full appointment. He accompanied Raffles during his tour of Java between 26 April and 1 August 1815, and published an account of the journey in *The Asiatic Journal*.³³ On 3 November 1815 he was appointed Superintendent of Public Buildings and Works at Jakarta. He remained on in Java after Raffles' departure from the island in March 1816 as Honorary *aide-de-camp* to his successor, John Fendall, and following the restitution of Java to the Dutch he travelled to England, apparently in the hope of joining Raffles on his voyage to west Sumatra in the *Lady Raffles*. His marriage to Sarah James of

³² Raffles to Thomas Macquoid, 17 January 1824, MSS. Eur. B. 322 (BL: O & IOC, London).

³³ 'A Journal of a Tour in the Island of Java. (By a Gentleman resident at Batavia)', *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependencies*, I, nos. 2–3 (February–March 1816), 124–9, 233–5. Unfortunately, the whole journey is not described as Watson failed to supply the remaining part of the account for publication.

Ballycrystal, County Wexford, on 7 October 1817 altered these plans, and he sailed instead on the *Providence*, arriving at Bengkulu with his wife on 25 November 1818, only to find Raffles absent in Calcutta.

As he was in possession of testimonials from the Duke of Kent, to whom his father had been an *aide-de-camp*, Watson immediately proceeded to Bengal aboard the *Marquis of Hastings*, leaving his wife behind at Bengkulu. In Calcutta he found his testimonials of no use in securing preferment, and he returned to west Sumatra on 30 July 1819. Three months later he accompanied Raffles to Calcutta, when the latter tried unsuccessfully to secure the succession to Colonel John Bannerman (1759–1819) as Governor of Prince of Wales Island. This time he was more fortunate and obtained the appointment as Commander of the local corps raised for service at Fort Marlborough. He remained in Calcutta recruiting the corps which arrived at Bengkulu in two ships in March 1820. From this time Watson's relations with Raffles deteriorated, partly because of a conflict over his military authority, and partly as a result of the confined life at Fort Marlborough which made quarrels inevitable.³⁴ He began to head the local opposition to Raffles and commenced a persecution of the latter's brother-in-law, Lieutenant Lawrence Nilson Hull (1799–1845), in order to annoy him. Finally, after various acts of disobedience, Raffles had his name struck off the strength of the Fort Marlborough garrison, and in June 1822 sent him to Calcutta under arrest. No proceedings were taken against him in Calcutta, and he returned to Singapore and continued to trade, dying there on 16 September 1834.³⁵

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Notes

³⁴ According to Travers, '[For] Marlbro', 'without exception, is the most unpleasantly circumstanced place with respect to society I ever knew. In limited circles such as here, petty feuds generally exist but here we have greater annoyances. The younger part of the society [is] in one continued state of warfare with Government,....' (*Journal of Thomas Otho Travers*, 122).

³⁵ MS. Travers' Journal, March 1829.